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FRANCIS PLACE

THE TAILOR OF CHARING CROSS

BY

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FRANCIS PLACE,

THE TAILOR OF CHARING CROSS.

FRANCIS PLACE was born on November 3rd, 1771, in a "sponging-house," or private debtors' prison, in Vinegar Yard, near Drury Lane, kept by his father, Simon Place, who was at that time a bailiff to the Marshalsea Court. He died on January 1st, 1854, at a house in Foxley Terrace, Earl's Court, at the age of eighty-two. His death attracted almost as little attention as his birth. He might have passed out of the memory of men had not Mr. Graham Wallas dug out the facts of his career from a mass of unattractive manuscripts, and printed them in his admirable "Life of Francis Place." Yet no man of his century was more necessary to the establishment of democracy in England than he. He was essentially the practical man in politics. Other men saw visions and dreamed dreams, but he, when they related their visions and retold their dreams, turned the visions into acts and the dreams into laws. He was an agitator of a totally different type from the agitator of common imagination. He had not the gift of oratory, and was a little distrustful of those who had; he could not stir an audience by emotional appeals, nor did he aspire to do so; he could not force men to deeds by finely written statements, though he tried to do so: he was too prolix, too eager to state all that there was to state, whereas the art of writing consists in knowing what to omit; but he could prepare plans for using to the best advantage the emotion which orators evoked. He made ways for the safe passage of democracy, and devised schemes for its protection while it was still weak. When the visionaries came to him and said, "The people must be free," he replied: "Yes, but how shall we make them free?" And then, so practical was he, instantly set about discovering a means to this end. The idealist and the practical man too frequently work in opposition to each other. It was fortunate for the cause of democracy that Francis Place, entirely practical, should always have desired to work with the idealists who were setting up the structure of a commonwealth in England in the early nineteenth century.

Boyhood and Education.

His father was a rough, careless, and sometimes brutal man, whose habitual method of communicating with his children was to assault them. "If he were coming along a passage or any narrow place such as a doorway, and was met by either me or my brother, he always made a blow at us with his fist for coming in his way. If we attempted

to retreat he would make us come forward, and as certainly as we came forward he would knock us down." Mr. Place, after a number of years' service as a keeper of a sponging-house, took a tavern, but he spent so much of his money in the State lotteries that he frequently had to resort to his old trade as a journeyman baker in order to retrieve his losses, his wife in the meantime maintaining their family by needlework. From the age of four until he was nearly fourteen Francis was sent to one of the private adventure schools which abounded in the neighborhood of Drury Lane and Fleet Street in the eighteenth century. The instruction given to him was of poor quality, but he was quick-witted and eager to know, and he easily became head boy in his school. His thirst for learning, however, did not prevent him from taking part in the street life of his day. He was, writes Mr. Graham Wallas, skilled in street games, a hunter of bullock in the Strand, an obstinate faction fighter, and a daily witness of every form of open crime and debauchery.

When the time came for him to leave school, he being then about fourteen years old, his father decided to apprentice him to a conveyancer, but he refused to become a lawyer; and his father, thus flouted, strode into the bar-parlor and offered him as an apprentice to anyone who would have him. A drunken breeches maker, named France, accepted the offer, and to him the boy was formally bound. During this time he became associated with a "cutter club"—an eight-oared boat's crew—who used to drink and sing together in the evening. The coxswain of this crew was subsequently transported for robbery, and the stroke oar was hanged for murder. A certain quality of pride saved Francis Place from dissoluteness, and in 1790, when he was eighteen, and had given up his indentures, he met his future wife, Elizabeth Chadd.

Marriage.

The effect of this meeting was to check any tendency to viciousness he ever had. He then began the career of extraordinary endeavor, which lasted for the remainder of his life. His fortunes at this time were not happy. His trade was a declining industry, and, although he was a highly skilled workman, he could not earn more than fourteen shillings a week. His family was impoverished; his father, in ill-health, had sold his tavern and had lost the proceeds in a lottery, and his mother was obliged to work as a washerwoman. The time did not seem propitious for marriage; but Place, always indomitable and always hopeful, was prepared to take risks which Elizabeth Chadd, unhappy at home, was willing to share, and in March, 1791, when he was nineteen and a-half, and she was not quite seventeen, they married and went to live in one room in a court off the Strand. Their joint earnings were under seventeen shillings a week. "From this we had to pay for lodgings three shillings and sixpence a week, and on an average one shilling and sixpence a week for coals and candles. Thus we had only twelve shillings a week for food and clothes and other necessaries."

When he was twenty-one, and the father of a child, a strike took place in the leather breeches trade. At this time the Combination Laws were still in force. There were, however, a number of societies of a purely benevolent character in existence, and to one of these, the Breeches Makers' Benefit Society, Francis Place belonged. He has left an interesting account of this society and the strike which it caused : "The club, though actually a benefit club, was intended for the purpose of supporting the members in a strike for wages. It had now, in the spring of 1793, about £250 in its chest, which was deemed sufficient. A strike was agreed upon, and the men left their work."

The conditions of labor in this trade were exceedingly bad. A skilled workman, regularly employed, could earn a guinea a week ; but regular employment was seldom to be had, and, generally speaking, wages for good workmen, often employed, were never more than eighteen shillings a week, and frequently a good deal less. Unfortunately for the leather breeches makers, the employers made a counter move, which eventually destroyed the strike. They urged their customers to buy stuff breeches instead of those made of leather, and at the same time organized a boycott of all leather breeches makers, whether they were concerned in the strike or not. The Combination Laws theoretically applied to all members of the community, to employers as well as to workmen, but although they were rigorously enforced against workmen, Place, in after life, was unable to discover a single instance of their having been enforced against employers.

First Efforts at Organization.

Although Place was a member and a regular subscriber to the funds of his society, he seldom attended any of its meetings, and he was unaware of the fact that a strike had been decided upon, or that it had actually taken place, until he received his dismissal from one of his employers. The moment he heard of the strike he went to the club house, where he was informed that every man out of work would receive seven shillings a week from the funds. He made enquiries, and learned that there were as many members of the society as there were pounds in the chest, and saw that the funds would be exhausted in three weeks. His genius for organizing began to stir. The stewards of the club had no plans laid. It seemed to them that all that was necessary was to declare a strike and pay out seven shillings a week to the members until the funds were depleted. They hoped that by that time the employers would also be exhausted. Place changed all that. He suggested that those members who were prepared to leave London, undertaking not to return for one month, should receive a week's payment in advance. These men would not receive any further sum. A number of the members accepted the offer because of the custom of the trade that a tramping journeyman should receive a day's keep, a night's lodging, and a shilling the next morning, and in some of the larger towns a breakfast and half-a-crown from country leather breeches makers' shops to help him along until he had obtained work.

When this matter was settled, and the fund was thereby relieved, Place proposed another scheme of an ingenious character, whereby each man remaining in London, instead of receiving seven shillings per week, should make up two pairs of breeches of a particular quality, for which he should be allowed four shillings each pair. These breeches were sold in a shop taken for the purpose, Place being employed as manager for twelve shillings a week. The effect of these proposals was that the fund, instead of being exhausted at the end of three weeks, lasted for three months. The strike, however, was unsuccessful. When the money was expended the men had to return to work on the employers' terms, and those of them, like Place, who had been conspicuous in the strike, were refused employment of any sort by any leather breeches maker. The failure of the strike was due to the facts that the industry was a declining one and that the masters, being few in number, were able to combine with little trouble against their workers.

A Time of Acute Poverty.

To this time of strike organization there succeeded, for Place, a time of acute poverty. For eight months he could not obtain work of any kind. He had expended his small savings during the period of the strike and so was without resources. His only child had sickened of smallpox and died. He and his wife suffered every privation that comes from lack of food and adequate shelter. They had pawned all that they had to pawn, obtaining for this purpose the services of an old woman who lived in the same house; for, though they were actually enduring hunger, neither he nor she would go to the pawnbroker in person. When they could no longer find pledgable goods, the old woman, guessing their state, informed the landlord of the house, and he offered them credit for everything he sold, whilst his wife almost forced them to accept bread, coals, soap and candles. "And at the end of our privation, notwithstanding we were only half fed on bread and water, with an occasional red herring, we were six pounds in debt to our landlord."

When it seemed that the boycott upon him would not be removed, Place decided to leave his trade, and sought employment as overseer of parish scavengers at eighteen shillings a week. He obtained the post, but a few days before he was expected to begin his duties, one of his former employers sent for him. He declined to go, suspecting that this was a trap, such as had already been laid for him, to obtain an admission from him of the existence of a trade club, in order to secure his prosecution under the Combination Laws. Mrs. Place, however, went in his stead, "and in a short time she returned and let fall from her apron as much work for me as she could bring away. She was unable to speak until she was relieved by a flood of tears." He and she set to work, laboring sixteen and sometimes eighteen hours a day. "We turned out of bed to work, and turned from our work to bed again." In a short time they were able to redeem their furniture and to purchase necessaries. They moved to a more convenient home, and so prosperous did they become that Place was able to assist his mother to some extent.

Self-Education.

During this terrible period of his life Place read a great many hard books, "many volumes in history, voyages and travels, politics, law and philosophy, Adam Smith and Locke, and especially Hume's Essays and Treatises. . . . I taught myself decimals, equations, the square, cube and biquadrate roots. I got some knowledge of logarithms and some of algebra. I readily got through a small school book of geometry, and having an odd volume, the first of Williamson's Euclid, I attacked it vigorously and perseveringly." Prior to this time he had read "the histories of Greece and Rome, and some translated works of Greek and Roman writers; Hume, Smollett, Fielding's novels and Robertson's works, some of Hume's Essays, some translations from French writers and much on geography, some books on anatomy and surgery, some relating to science and the arts, and many magazines. I had worked all the problems in the introduction to Guthrie's Geography, and had made some small progress in geometry." In addition he had read "Blackstone, Hale's 'Common Law,' several other law books, and much biography." He obtained these books partly through the good offices of an old woman who acted as caretaker of chambers in the Temple—she borrowed the books from the rooms she cleaned—and partly through hiring them from a book shop in Maiden Lane, Charing Cross, "leaving a small sum as deposit and paying a trifle for reading them."

After a few months of prosperity his work slackened, and again he found himself unemployed. He immediately set about reorganizing the Breeches Makers' Benefit Society, set it up in 1794 as a Tontine Sick Club, himself the secretary at a salary of £10 per annum, and was able to obtain in the spring of 1795, without a strike, the increase of wage which had unsuccessfully been demanded in 1793. This success, apparently, was too much for the members of the society. They seemed to imagine that their labor troubles were for ever at an end, and they dissolved the society, sharing the funds among the members. Place lost his post. For a time he was employed by other trade clubs to draft rules and articles, and was appointed secretary and organizer of the carpenters, plumbers, and other trade clubs. He was now twenty-three years of age.

The State of Europe.

The history of the world at that time was one of change and revolution. Ancient institutions were toppling, and great traditions were dissolving. In America and in France, republics had been established. In England, the old order was speedily giving place to the new: the aristocrat and landed proprietor was collapsing before the plutocrat and factory owner. In Ireland, discontent was about to swell into rebellion. The naturalistic philosophers had dealt stout blows to religion and the divine right of kings—the whole social theory was being revised and restated. The spirit of Voltaire and Rousseau was abroad in England, preparing the way which later on was to be trodden by Byron and Shelley. Thomas Paine had lately published "The Rights of Man," the most famous of all the replies

to Burke's "Reflections upon the French Revolution," and a million and a half copies had been sold in England alone. Later came the "Age of Reason," which, shattered Place's Christianity.

It was natural, therefore, that in the great recasting of the world's beliefs which then took place, Francis Place should turn his mind towards those who were identified with the building of a democracy in England. In 1794 he became a member of the London Corresponding Society—"the mother," as Burke called it, "of all the mischief." It was characteristic of Place that he joined the society at a time when many of its members had been frightened into resignation through the persecution of some of its officers. "Many persons, of whom I was one, considered it meritorious and the performance of a duty to become members now that it [the society] was threatened with violence." It seems incredible that this society, with mild intentions, should have so terrified the oligarchy as it apparently did. Its political program consisted of universal suffrage, annual parliaments, payment of members, and its object was to "correspond with other societies that might be formed having the same object in view, as well as with public-spirited individuals." The title of the society led many persons to believe that its function was to correspond with the Government of France: the state of the public mind at that time was so panicky that such correspondence was instinctively assumed to be of a treasonable character. The society, however, had no relationship with the French Government. Its constitution was framed for the purpose of enabling working class organizations throughout the country to communicate with each other by letter without violating the law against the federation of political bodies.

The London Corresponding Society.

In May, 1794, Thomas Hardy, the secretary and founder of the society, together with ten other persons, was arrested for high treason. Place became a member of one of the committees which were formed to arrange for the defence of the accused men. The result of the trial was that the prisoners were acquitted, and instantly there came a great accession to the membership of the society. Place became a person of consequence, generally taking the chair at committee meetings. He began to urge that method of political agitation which remained his method for the rest of his life, and which he practised with singular success. He opposed himself to those who were continually urging that public demonstrations should be held chiefly to scare the oligarchs into granting reforms. Place did not believe in the excessive susceptibility of the governing classes to terror. "I believed that ministers would go on until they brought the Government to a standstill—that was until they could carry it on no longer. It appeared to me that the only chance the people either had or could have for cheap and good government was in their being taught the advantages of representation, so as to lead them to desire a wholly representative government; so that whenever the conduct of ministers should produce a crisis, they should be qualified to support those who were the most likely to establish a cheap and

simple sort of government. I therefore advised that the society should proceed as quietly and privately as possible." His advice at this date was disregarded, and the scarifying demonstrations were held; but the oligarchy, instead of frantically passing ameliorative Acts, promptly passed Treason and Sedition Bills, suspended Habeas Corpus, and clapped the agitators into gaol without trial. The effect of this was almost to destroy the society, the more timid members scurrying out of it in that panic which they had hoped would fall upon the governing classes. It lived on in a state of depressed vitality, but Place, finding his advice several times foolishly disregarded, resigned from it, and in 1798, the year of the Irish rebellion, it died.

Attempts to Establish a Business.

While Place was engaged in these political adventures, he was also endeavoring to raise his status from that of a journeyman to that of an employer. He thought of a method of doing this which he calculated would take six years to execute, although, as the event showed, he was able to do it in four years. The success of the scheme depended upon patience, much knowledge of human nature, very hard work and an indomitable will. Place possessed all these qualities. He began to build up a connection by getting a few private customers, and then he set about obtaining credit from drapers and clothiers. "I knew that by purchasing materials at two or three shops, however small the quantities, and letting each of them know that I made purchases of others, each would sell to me at as low a price as he could, and each would after a time give me credit." He did this, and soon found, as he had anticipated, that offers of credit were made to him. "From this time I always bought on short credit; instead of paying for the goods, I put by the money, taking care always to pay for what I had before the term of credit expired. I thus established a character for punctuality and integrity . . . and, as I foresaw, I should, if I could once take a shop, have credit for any amount whatever."

Misfortune in Business.

Unfortunately, his fortune did not flourish as well at first as he had hoped. His charges were low and his customers were few, and some of them neglected to pay for the goods with which he supplied them. His family, which now consisted of himself, his wife, and two children, began to suffer hardship again, and his wife, whose nerve had been shattered in the bad time that succeeded the strike of the leather breeches makers, urged him to give up his hope of becoming a master and resume his occupation as a journeyman. He steadfastly refused to do this, insisting that he would work himself into a condition to become a master tradesman. During this period, one of "great privation," he displayed that immense strength of purpose which distinguished him always, and which, a little later than this, was to endure a greater trial still. Only a man of unbounded self-confidence would have faced the chilly, grey view which lay before

Francis Place at that time. Only a man of unquenchable spirit would have thought, when he was half-starved, of learning French so that he might give his children "the best possible education which my circumstances could afford." He propped his French grammar before him while he worked, and learnt it by rote. He spent his evenings in reading Helvetius, Rousseau and Voltaire, and despite his acute poverty, men of advanced views began to seek him out in order that they might talk to him on the topics of the time.

His fortune improved a little, and in 1799 he and a fellow-workman entered into partnership and opened a tailor's shop at 29 Charing Cross. The stock was obtained on credit, and the joint cash funds of the partners on the opening day were one shilling and tenpence! In two years they were employing thirty-six men! It was now, when prosperity seemed to be leaping upon him, that Place suffered his greatest trial. His partner married a woman who could not agree with Place, and, apparently at her suggestion, and on the strength of the promise of a large loan, he forced the business into liquidation and bought the goodwill for himself. Poor Mrs. Place lost her spirit altogether. "She saw nothing before her but destruction. Industry was no use to us, integrity would not serve us, honesty would be of no avail. We had worked harder and done more than anybody else, and now we were to suffer more than anybody else." For the rest of her life she was haunted by the fear of poverty. But this sudden disaster did not destroy Francis Place. He convinced his creditors that he had been vilely served by his partner, and they offered him so much assistance that, in 1801, three months after he had first learnt of his partner's perfidy, he opened a finer and bigger shop on his own account at No. 16 Charing Cross. From this time onwards his affairs prospered, and in 1816 the net profits for the year from his business were more than three thousand pounds. He retired from trade in 1817, his age being forty-six years, and devoted himself to politics.

Place had one very notable quality—the power to concentrate on a particular piece of work—and during the first five years that he was tenant of the shop in Charing Cross, he devoted himself entirely to the task of building up his business. The time, as has been said, was troublous, and the borough in which he lived, that of the City and Liberty of Westminster, was the vent of discontent. By arrangement, the two seats for the borough were shared by the Whigs and the Tories. Radical candidates sought election without success. At the end of five years' tenancy of his shop, Place began to relax his attention from business considerations and revived his interest in politics. At first he found his friends among the well-to-do Whig tradesmen, most of whom were electors of the borough and great admirers of Charles James Fox, Sheridan and Erskine. Place, who "never had any respect for Fox or Sheridan, and not much for Erskine," bantered his friends on their regard for the Whigs, "who cared little for the people further than they could be made to promote their own interests, whether those interests were popular or pecuniary." Indeed, his hatred of the Whigs was almost excessive.

Always they were "the dirty Whigs," the sole difference between them and the Tories being that "the Tories would exalt the kingly power that it might trample upon the aristocracy and the people, while the Whigs would establish an aristocratical oligarchy to trample on the king and the people." About this time Cobbett, for whom Place had very little respect, was endeavoring, in his *Political Register*, to revive the democratic movement, and seeing in the borough of Westminster a likely seat for a democratic representative, he wrote four "Letters to the Electors of Westminster," which were printed in his journal. The last of these letters was published just after Lord Percy, eldest son of the Duke of Northumberland, and "a very young man, without pretensions to talents of any kind," had, through a ministerial trick, been returned unopposed for the borough. The letter bitterly reproached the electors for allowing themselves to be hoodwinked as they had been, and it had considerable effect upon those who read it.

Westminster Politics.

But the reproaches of Cobbett were not the only force which set going a movement among the electors to secure independent representation for Westminster. The conduct of the Duke of Northumberland during the sham election was one factor, Sir Francis Burdett was another. The duke ordered his servants, clad in showy livery, to distribute bread and beer and cheese among a number of ruffians who congregated about his house. The servants tossed chunks of bread among these men and women, who were, of course, alleged to be the free and independent voters of Westminster. The spectacle of these people clawing at the bread and lapping up the beer, which had been upset from the barrels and was running through the gutters, filled the electors themselves with disgust. In 1807 Sir Francis Burdett, a very wealthy man, sick of the intrigues of parties, was nominated, almost against his desire, as a candidate for the borough, together with one James Paull, who had polled a respectable number of votes at a previous election. Place, who had begun to extend his circle of acquaintance in the district, took charge of the electoral arrangements, and, despite the fact that the two candidates quarrelled four days before the date of the poll and fought a duel in which they were both seriously wounded, managed to get Burdett elected. Paull's candidature had been dropped. For three weeks Place worked at the committee rooms from seven o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock at night. The difficulties seemed almost insuperable, and the discouragements offered to the Radicals were enormous. They had decided not to have any "paid counsellors, attorneys, inspectors or canvassers, no bribing, no paying of rates, no treating, no cockades, no paid constables, excepting two to keep the committee-room doors." They simply informed the magistrates of what they were doing, and left the responsibility of keeping the peace to them.

Place had organized this election so remarkably that he was resorted to by all sorts of persons for advice in connection with de-

monstrations, and the Westminster Committee became the recognized political authority in the borough. Sir Francis Burdett, sincerely democratic, was not a very able man, and a few years later he allowed himself to be convinced that Place was a Government spy. The grounds for this charge were too flimsy to bear examination, but for nine years Place and Burdett did not speak ; and, owing to the aspersions made upon him, Place withdrew from active association with his former friends, although he always gave his advice to them when they asked for it, which was frequently. What follows explains why.

Imprisonment of Sir Francis Burdett.

It happened in the course of time that Burdett came into collision with the Government in defence of free speech. He had made a speech in the House of Commons protesting against the imprisonment of one John Gale Jones, who had been committed to Newgate for organizing a discussion at a debating society on the action of the Government in prohibiting strangers from the House during the debate on the Walcheren expedition. Burdett printed his speech in Cobbett's *Register*, and this act was held to be a breach of privilege. A motion to commit Burdett to the Tower was carried by a majority of 38, but Burdett, barricading himself in his house at Piccadilly, announced that he considered the Speaker's warrant to be illegal, and that he would resist its execution by force. The soldiers were called out, the mob became agitated, and the City authorities, who were antagonistic to the Government, tried, without success, to convince the Government that their conduct was illegal. A council of war, to which Place was invited, was held in Burdett's house. A number of half-crazy people were present, one of whom had devised a plan for defending the house from the attack of the soldiery. Gunpowder mines were to be laid in front of the house, so that the attacking soldiers might easily be blown to a place where there is neither war nor rumors of war. The common sense of Place was obviously necessary to restrain these wild conspirators. "It will be easy enough," he said, "to clear the hall of constables and soldiers, to drive them into the street or to destroy them, but are you prepared to take the next step and go on ?"

They were not prepared to take the next step ; they knew that it was impossible for them to do so ; and so the crazy scheme crumpled up. Place did not object to the proposal to resist the soldiers by force because it was a proposal to declare civil war, but because it was impossible for the rebellious Radicals to make any sort of a fight. "There was no organization and no arms, and to have resisted under such circumstances would have been madness." All they could do, he urged, with any hope of success was to use the police forces of the City against the Government. For various reasons, the City forces were unavailing, and Burdett was arrested and conveyed to the Tower. Whilst he was in prison, Place was called upon to serve on the jury which inquired into the circumstances in which Joseph Sellis, valet to the Duke of Cumberland, died.

Charged with Treachery.

The duke was very unpopular with the populace, and most people desired that the jury should return a verdict to the effect that the valet had been murdered by his master. Place, having carefully investigated the evidence, came to the conclusion that Sellis died by his own hand, and succeeded in bringing the other jurymen to the same conclusion, although they were all prejudiced against the duke. It was because of his conduct on this occasion that Place was accused of being a Government spy, and through it, with the help of the malicious, he lost the friendship of Burdett. For ten years the word "spy" was the favorite taunt thrown at him by those whom he displeased.

The effect of this on his career was partly good and partly bad: bad, because it led to his abstention from movements in which he would have been of the greatest service; good, because the leisure he now had enabled him to get into contact with men who had other points of view than mere Radicalism. He became acquainted with Thomas Spence, the land nationalizer, and with Robert Owen. Spence was a very honest, very poor, and very single-minded man, who loved mankind in the abstract so passionately that when he contemplated mankind in the concrete he lost his temper. He had fixed his mind so completely on land nationalization that he could not see or think of anything else. He suffered very great privations in propagating his views, getting his living by trundling a barrow about London, from which he sold saloup and pamphlets denouncing landlords and their villainies. He was John the Baptist to Henry George. The nationalization of land meant to him the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth and the birth of a new race of men. The man who is optimistic about the future is invariably pessimistic about the present, and it was so with this poor Spence. No man loved humanity so purely as he, and no man lashed his fellows with his tongue so bitterly. He reviled the men about him because they were not the men of his dream Contact with this one-idea'd man sharpened Place's belief that the men of the vision can only be brought to reality out of the flesh and blood of the men of fact.

Robert Owen.

Robert Owen, that curious compound of a man of vision and a man of affairs, came to Place in 1813 with his "New View of Society." He was "a man of kind manners and good intentions, of an imper-
turbable temper, and an enthusiastic desire to promote the happiness of mankind." Like all men who have discovered the secret of human ills, Owen was convinced that his project, so "simple, easy of adoption, and so plainly efficacious must be embraced by every thinking man the moment he was made to understand it." It is, perhaps, the fundamental defect of the idealist mind that it forgets that human nature is not a rigid, measurable thing, and that the charm of human beings is not in their resemblances, but in their differences. Owen looked upon the world and saw it peopled by

millions of Robert Owens ; and, since he knew what Robert Owen desired, he imagined that he also knew what all men needed and desired. Once, after he had seen Owen, Place wrote in his diary : " Mr. Owen this day has assured me, in the presence of more than thirty other persons, that within six months the whole state and condition of society in Great Britain will be changed, and all his views will be carried into effect."

Place also became acquainted with many of the Utilitarian philosophers. James Mill, the father of John Stuart, and Jeremy Bentham became his close friends, and from them he derived an amount of knowledge which he could not otherwise have obtained. James Mill was a man of notable austerity of manner, as those who have read John Stuart Mill's Autobiography will know. He must have been an uncomfortable sort of man to live with, for he could not, as Place could, comprehend the value of idleness. He saw the world as an enormous schoolroom, and all the men and women merely scholars, but he did not appear to see any place in which the knowledge when obtained would be used. Like St. Francis of Assisi, he despised every worldly thing ; but, unlike St. Francis, he had no hope of a better place. He simply acquired knowledge for knowledge's sake. Whenever Place visited the Mills, he, like all who stayed with them, was put through his lessons as relentlessly as John Stuart and Willie and Clara Mill. For four hours every day he was compelled to grind at Latin, repeating the declensions afterwards to the inexorable Mill. Out of this tremendous industry, this search for knowledge, there came that spirit which tests and is not afraid to reject. The Utilitarians had for their watchword " the greatest happiness of the greatest number." James Mill did not believe in happiness at all, but he was prepared to make the best of a hopeless case, and so he and his friends set themselves to the task of delivering England from the mess in which they found her.

Malthusianism.

Place saturated his mind with the writings of the political economists, and about this time he got the one bee which he ever had in his bonnet. He read Malthus's " Principle of Population," and became a Neo-Malthusian in theory, for in practice he had fifteen children. Until he died he believed that the redemption of the people from poverty could only be brought about by the limitation of families. Laws wisely administered might do much, but they would only be so much trifling with a great problem. It is astonishing, when one reflects upon the fact that he possessed rather more common sense than is generally given to men, that he should so easily have believed this economic fairy tale. But although he held this belief very firmly, he did not, as the one-idea'd do, preach it exclusively. He saw that Neo-Malthusian doctrines were not likely to impress ignorant and impoverished men, and he set about the work of creating an instructed and prosperous race. There was an enormous amount to be done. The Combination Laws were still in force, and these alone made it impossible for the working class to

improve their status. The theory of individualism at that date had completely gone out of its mind. There were no trade unions, no Factory Acts, no Public Health Acts, no Education Acts, no Workmen's Compensation Acts ; the Corn Laws were still unrepealed ; the franchise was a limited one ; the Poor Law was that of Elizabeth. The agricultural laborer was in a state of frightful demoralization, and the town laborer was little better. There was such a state of affairs in England as should have inspired any self-respecting deity to fury, and have reduced the most optimistic of men to a state of chronic depression. The odd thing about human nature is that it never despairs, and although that terrible time in England seems to us, who stand at this distance from it, to have been one in which obstacles were piled so high in the way of the reformer that progress was almost impossible, the reformers of the day regarded them with as good heart as we regard the comparatively trifling obstacles that lie strewn about the field of endeavor to-day. If Carlyle, who came later, saw men as "mostly fools," Place saw them as "mostly ignorant," and so that this description might no longer be applicable to his countrymen he devoted himself to the business of education.

Elementary Education.

It is commonly alleged by the Church educationists that the system of elementary education in England was started by members of the Established Church. "There is a sense," the *Church Times* says, "in which every Christian is a member of the Church of England . . . but a Quaker is an unbaptized person, and therefore not a Christian at all." In 1798, a young Quaker, named Joseph Lancaster, began to teach poor boys in a shed adjoining his father's house in the Borough Road. Lancaster was one of those men with whom Place frequently came in contact, a mixture of pure genius and pure folly. He could conceive big ideas, but he could not rear them after delivery. Place was the divinely-inspired foster-parent to the ideas of such men. He could not himself conceive large schemes, but he had the rare faculty of knowing a good idea when he saw it, and the still rarer faculty of being able to develop the idea and bring it to adult life. Lancaster was a wild creature, extraordinarily extravagant, somehow convinced that he had only to spend enough money for his difficulties to disappear. He was continually in danger of being committed to the debtors' prison. His proposal was to establish schools in which the pupils should be taught by older pupils—monitors. The whole education theory at that time, so far as working class children were concerned, was very hazy. The idea that the task might be undertaken by the State does not appear to have penetrated even Place's mind : he and his colleagues saw the Lancastrian schools resting for ever on a voluntary basis. In these circumstances, economy was essential. Subscriptions were not likely to be large or many, for a large number of influential persons were opposed to education for the working class. Lord Grosvenor, whom Place approached, "said he had a strong desire to assist the institution, but he had also some

apprehension that the education the people were getting would make them discontented with the Government *we* must take care of ourselves." He did not subscribe. It must not be thought, however, that the necessity for economy was the cause of the monitorial system being employed. Place himself was of opinion that the teaching of children by children was a better way of educating them than having them taught by trained men and women. On this basis the schools were started after a great deal of wrangling between Lancaster and the trustees whom he had persuaded to provide the funds needed. In 1811 the "National Society for the Education of Poor Children in the Principles of the Established Church" was formed, and elementary education, so to speak, found its legs.

The Lancastrian Schools.

The history of the Lancastrian schools is a saddening one. Lancaster quarrelled interminably, and finally he had to be pensioned off. The society was dissolved and a fresh one was formed, Place being a member of the committee. In drawing up the bye-laws of the new society he displayed his intense dislike of patronage of poor people. He deleted the words "poor" and "laboring poor" and any expression which "could give offence or hurt the feelings of anyone." He never at any time forgot that he, too, had suffered poverty; and even in connection with his fad, Neo-Malthusianism, he retained undiminished his loyalty to his class. "Mr. Malthus," he writes, concerning "Principle of Population," "denies to the unemployed workman the right to eat, but he allows the right to the unemployed rich man. He says, 'Every man may do as he will with his own,' and he expects to be able to satisfy the starving man with bare assertions of abstract rights. Mr. Malthus is not speaking of *legal right*, for, he says, the poor have a *legal right*, which is the very thing he proposes to destroy. It is an abstract right, which is denied to the poor man, but allowed to the rich; and this abstract, which has no meaning, although dignified with the title of the 'law of nature, which is the law of God,' is to be explained and taught to the poor, who are to be fully convinced."

Place worked with great assiduity for the success of the Lancastrian schools, and endeavored to start a series of higher schools on a similar basis, for which Jeremy Bentham devised a scheme of education. He mapped the whole of London into districts, in each of which there was to be a school to which poor parents could send their children on payment of a penny a week. This payment was to save the pupils from the stigma of charity. But all his educational plans failed. The monitorial system was a bad one; Lancaster was plotting against Place; and, worst of all, the committee began to quarrel among themselves. Place was an atheist, and he made no secret of his disbelief in God. Lancaster wrote to members of the committee, alleging that Place secretly designed to remove the Bible from the schools, and succeeded in creating so much ferment that, although he personally was discredited, Place found it no

longer possible to work with his colleagues, and so he resigned his position.

Joseph Hume.

By this time he was well acquainted with Joseph Hume, whom he supplied with facts and material for argument in favor of reforms in the House of Commons. The combination of talents that here took place was a remarkable one. Hume, a very sincere Radical, had enormous vitality and was absolutely impervious to discouragement. He could not be put out of countenance by anyone. Place was industrious and certain. He could draw up rules and schemes easily. When he presented a document to a member of Parliament, the member could be assured that it contained facts and not fancies. These two men in conjunction, the one in the House, the other outside, both of them the butts of the wealthy and the powerful, between them compelled the oligarchy to do their will. But Place was the greater man of the two. Hume had the sense to do what Place told him, though now and then, as in the case of the Combination Laws, he had to be urged somewhat strenuously to action. When Hume had to speak in the House, he went as a matter of course to Place for instructions, and Place primed him so well that he always made a mark in the debates.

Reference has several times been made in this short sketch to the Combination Laws. During the eighteenth century there had been passed a series of statutes directed against combinations of journeymen in particular trades. The first of the series was an Act of 1721 "for regulating the journeymen tailors within the bills of mortality," and the last the General Act of 1799 "to prevent unlawful combinations of workmen." A unanimous refusal to work at reduced prices was regarded as sufficient evidence of unlawful combination, and the non-acceptance by an unemployed journeyman of work offered to him by an employer in his trade meant liability to undergo a long period of imprisonment or to be impressed into His Majesty's sea or land forces. These laws were the most serious obstacle that lay in the way of labor. So long as they were on the statute book the condition of the working class nearly approached that of slavery. It was to remove them from the statute books that Francis Place worked, and in 1824-5, working almost single handed, he managed to do it. "The Labor Question," wrote Mr. Gladstone in 1892, "may be said to have come into public view simultaneously with the repeal, between sixty and seventy years ago, of the Combination Laws, which had made it an offence for laboring men to unite for the purpose of procuring by joint action, through peaceful means, an augmentation of their wages. From this point progress began."

The Combination Laws.

In 1810, the *Times* prosecuted its journeymen compositors for belonging to a combination and taking part in a strike. This is the text of the sentence inflicted upon them by Sir John Sylvester (Bloody Black Jack), the Common Serjeant of London :

"Prisoners, you have been convicted of a most wicked conspiracy to injure the most vital interests of those very employers who gave you bread, with intent to impede and injure them in their business ; and, indeed, as far as in you lay, to effect their ruin. The frequency of such crimes among men of your class of life, and their mischievous and dangerous tendency to ruin the fortunes of those employers which a principle of gratitude and self-interest should induce you to support, demand of the law that a severe example should be made of those persons who shall be convicted of such daring and flagitious combinations in defiance of public justice and in violation of public order. No symptom of contrition on your part has appeared, no abatement of the combination in which you are accomplices has yet resulted from the example of your convictions."

Bloody Black Jack thereupon sentenced the prisoners, who had asked for higher wages, to terms of imprisonment varying from nine months to two years.

In the same year that this happened the master tailors tried to obtain an Act of Parliament to put down a combination of their workmen, and Place, who was a master tailor, was invited to join the committee. He refused to join the committee, but they elected him a member of it against his will. He attended one meeting and told the masters as plainly as possible why he would not join them, and why they ought to abandon their project. They declined to do this, and a committee was appointed by the House of Commons to take evidence. Place went before the committee and offered to give evidence, which was accepted, and succeeded in bringing to the ground the proposal to quash the union. He now began seriously to get the laws repealed. He could not hope for assistance from the workmen themselves, who had made up their minds that the laws were irrevocable. Whenever a dispute took place between employers and workmen, he interfered, "sometimes with the masters, sometimes with the men, very generally, as far as I could, by means of one or more of the newspapers, and sometimes by acting as a pacifier, always pushing for the one purpose, the repeal of the laws." He wrote letters to trade societies, sent articles to newspapers, interviewed employers and workmen, and collected as much evidence as possible to assist him in his purpose. He lent money to the proprietor of a small newspaper in order that he might propagate his views in it, and he had copies of the paper distributed among people who were likely to be affected by it. He induced Hume to take interest in the proposal, and in five years had worked up so much feeling on the subject that he began to think the repeal of the laws was now certain. He was too optimistic, however, and it was not until 1822 that Hume gave notice of his intention to bring in a Bill for that purpose. This Bill was mainly intended to be a demonstration. "I was therefore in no hurry to urge Mr. Hume to proceed beyond indicating his purpose. I supplied him with a considerable quantity of papers, printed and manuscript, relating to the subject, advised him to examine them carefully, and promised my

assistance to the greatest possible extent for the next session. These papers were afterwards sent to Mr. McCulloch, at Edinburgh, who was at this time editor of the *Scotsman* newspaper, and he made admirable use of them in that paper. This gave a decided tone to several other country papers, and caused the whole subject to be discussed in a way, and to an extent, which it had never been before."

The Repeal of the Combination Laws.

Unfortunately, a Mr. Peter Moore, member for Coventry, in 1823 produced a rival Bill, which so scared the House of Commons that when Hume introduced Place's measure in 1824 it met with considerable opposition. In view of the temper of the House, Place advised Hume to abandon the Bill and move for a Select Committee to enquire into the working of the laws. The timidity of the general body of the House spread to some of Hume's supporters, who induced him to whittle the motion to nothing. Place began to stir. He lectured Hume at great length, wrote a letter to him to be shown to his wavering friends, and drew up memoranda for Hume's own benefit. The upshot of the affair was that Hume was bullied by Place into moving for the committee, which was appointed. A great deal of publicity was given to the fact that the committee was sitting, and delegates from workmen's societies began to arrive in London from all parts of the country. Place interviewed them all. "I heard the story which everyone of these men had to tell. I examined and cross-examined them, took down the leading particulars of each case, and then arranged the matter as briefs for Mr. Hume, and, as a rule, for the guidance of the witnesses, a copy was given to each." Place had to encounter great difficulties in preparing matter for this committee. The members of the committee would not allow him to assist Hume officially, and they professed great indignation at finding Hume's briefs made out in Place's handwriting. They talked of calling him before them for tampering with the witnesses, a course of action which would have pleased him immensely, but, preserving their sanity, they did not do so. The witnesses, too, were difficult. Many of them had pet theories of their own to expound, and Place was hard put to it to induce them to keep their theories to themselves. All of them expected that wages would instantly rise when the Combination Laws were repealed. "Not one of them," says Place, "had any idea of the connection between wages and population." Presumably Place, who spent three months in arranging the affairs of this committee, did a little unobtrusive propaganda on Neo-Malthusianism on discovering this.

His tactics in connection with the Select Committee seem to have been extremely able. The mere secretarial work which he performed was enough to try the strength of several men; but, in addition to this, he found time to think out the best way of circumventing the upholders of the laws. He had to make it clear to his friends that speechmaking would be a mistake, and that instead of

the committee presenting a report in the customary manner, it would be better to submit their recommendations at first in the shape of resolutions, and then, when argument had been expended and members of the House were tired of the subject, present the report.

This was done, and all went well until the Attorney-General persuaded Hume to allow a barrister, named Hamond, to draft the Bills. Hamond made a sad mess of the business, and the reformers were now in a difficulty. The Bills were not what they wanted, but if they were not careful they might lose even those. The difficulty was surmounted by Place, who simply redrafted the Bills as he desired them to be and said no more about it. Hamond, having received his fee, did not bother further, and in due course the Bills were passed through the Commons without anyone quite understanding what had happened, and, after a period of peril in the Lords, they became statutes. The Combination Laws were repealed and working men were free to combine for their own protection.

After the Combination Laws.

Place, having soaked his mind in the economics of the time (he had too much respect for economists) naturally enough failed to appreciate the necessity for Trade Unions. He imagined that the repeal of the Combination Laws would make them unnecessary. "The combinations of workmen are but defensive measures resorted to for the purpose of counteracting the offensive ones of their masters. . . . Combinations will soon cease to exist. Men have been kept together for long periods only by the oppression of the laws. These being repealed, combinations will lose the matter which cements them into masses, and they will fall to pieces." He had not at that date discovered that the securing of victory is not nearly so important as the maintenance of victory. When the Combination Laws were repealed the country was enjoying great prosperity, and the freed workmen speedily set about demanding a more adequate share in it. Strikes broke out everywhere. A section of the employing class began to agitate for the re-enactment of the laws, and Place, fearful lest this should happen, urged the workmen to desist from striking. But the workmen were not going to be persuaded even by good friends like Place to desist from enforcing their demands. They were profoundly convinced that the law had been used for the purpose of keeping down wages, and they were determined to get them raised, particularly as the cost of living was rapidly increasing. In the cotton trade a great lock-out by the masters took place. The shipbuilders refused to confer with their workmen on the question of grievances, and issued a note to the effect that members of the Shipwrights' Union would not be employed by them. "The conduct of both the sailors and shipwrights was exemplary, no disorderly acts could be alleged against them. But as the shipping interest . . . had the ready ear of ministers, they most shamefully misrepresented the conduct of the men, and represented the consequences as likely to lead to the

destruction of the commerce and shipping of the empire. Ministers were so ignorant as to be misled by these misrepresentations, and were mean and despicable enough to plot with these people against their workmen. The interest of the unprincipled proprietors of the *Times* newspaper was intimately connected with the 'shipping interest,' and it lent its services to their cause. It stuck at nothing in the way of false assertion and invective; it represented the conduct of Mr. Hume as mischievous in the extreme, and that of the working people all over the country as perfectly nefarious; and it urged ministers to re-enact the old laws, or to enact new ones, to bring the people into a state of miserable subjection." It will have been observed by those who read the press carefully during the Railway Strike in 1911 and the Coal Strike of 1912 that capitalist journalism has not changed its character.

Attempt to Re-enact the Combination Laws.

To this agitation there followed something which is one of the most discreditable of the many discreditable things that politicians have done. The shipbuilders, lying hard, induced Mr. Huskisson and Mr. (afterwards Sir Robert) Peel to give notice of their intention to re-enact the Combination Laws. Huskisson had already solemnly assured Hume that he had no intention whatever of doing this, and Hume, believing Huskisson to be a man of honor, had accepted his word, and so was unprepared to counter his motion for a committee. Fortunately, Huskisson had drafted his motion clumsily. He asked for a committee "to enquire respecting the conduct of workmen" Hume and Place were quick to see that such an enquiry could only be adequately conducted if the persons into whose conduct enquiry was to be made were given an opportunity of rebutting the charges made against them, and, to the astonishment and disgust of Huskisson, they demanded that the workmen should be brought before the committee and examined. Another factor in favor of Hume and Place was that the Easter holidays were approaching and the committee could not meet for at least a fortnight. Place used the time to great advantage. He wrote to the trade societies, urging them to send delegates and to collect money for the payment of parliamentary agents and expenses; he collected money himself; he wrote a pamphlet exposing Huskisson's speech, and had it carefully distributed. He and Hume "nobbled" the Attorney-General and succeeded in persuading him to refuse to draft Huskisson's Bill. They filled the passage leading to the committee room with workmen demanding to be examined. Place wrote letters here and letters there, put witnesses through their paces, interviewed members, induced witnesses to demand payment for their services, which had been refused, although it was made to employers without cavil, and annoyed the committee so intensely that they talked of having him brought to the bar of the Commons. He and Hume could not prevent a new measure from being passed, but they were able to mould it to so great an extent that it differed very slightly from the previous measure moved by Hume. In the Commons,

during the committee stage, the ministers attacked them grossly. "Wallace gave loose to invective and was disgracefully abusive. Huskisson became enraged and most grossly insulted Sir Francis Burdett and Mr. Hobhouse. Mr. Peel stuck at nothing. He lied so openly, so grossly, so repeatedly, and so shamelessly, as even to astonish me, who always thought, and still do think, him a pitiful, shuffling fellow. He was repeatedly detected by Mr. Hume and as frequently exposed. Still he lied again without the least embarrassment and was never in the smallest degree abashed."

Agitation for Reform. -

The repeal of the Combination Laws was not the only service which Place rendered to the cause of democracy, but it was the greatest. He might then reasonably have desisted from his labors, for he was growing old, and had suffered a great loss in the death of his wife, but he was of that order of men for whom there is no rest in life. There was work still to be done which he, better than other men, could do. The entire system of parliamentary representation needed reforming, and Place threw himself into this work with as much vigor as he had displayed over the Combination Laws.

George IV, a man of ungovernable temper, who was likely, said one of his tutors, to be "either the most polished gentleman or the most accomplished blackguard in Europe, possibly an admixture of both," died on January 26th, 1830. He was a god with clay feet, from the point of view of Whigs and Radicals; for his sympathy with Whiggery during the time that he was Prince of Wales was an affectation chiefly for the purpose of annoying his father. The movement for reform, begun in the reign of George III, was opposed, with the King's concurrence, by the ministers of George IV. A few months before he ascended the throne, the massacre of Peterloo took place. He opposed, on religious grounds, the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Bill until the Duke of Wellington informed him that either he would have to compromise with his religious conscience or make ready for civil war in Ireland. The King compromised. All compromise denotes friction and ill temper, and the circumstances of the time made it inevitable that the conduct of the State should be difficult. The Duke of Wellington, who as a politician lost the reputation he had gained as a soldier, was of the damn-your-eyes type of statesman, a type which, while picturesque, is unpleasant to live under. He rigidly opposed himself to any reform of the parliamentary system, and soon after the accession of William IV he was forced to resign the premiership. The state of Europe was again disturbed. The Three Days Revolution had taken place in Paris, and Louis Phillippe, a constitutional monarch, had supplanted Charles X, a despot. This change heartened the reformers in England. A little later came another revolution; Belgium broke away from Holland, but here there was less heartening for the reformers, who feared that the King's ministers, in consort with the governments of Prussia and Holland, might make war on France. Had such an alliance been formed for such a purpose,

there might have been in England a revolution approaching in fearfulness that which took place in France in 1793. Place, indeed, was prepared for this to happen. In the towns the housekeepers were banding themselves together and threatening to refuse to pay taxes should war be declared. In the country the laborers were burning hayricks in thirteen counties. In London, workmen, stirred by Robert Owen and Thomas Hodgskin, the forerunner and inspirer of Karl Marx, were in that mood of sullenness which is the prelude to revolt. Reform had to be, and so the Duke went out of power and the Whigs, under Earl Grey, came in.

The Reform Bill.

The Whigs, always valiant and progressive when the prospect of office was remote, were strangely reticent about their principles when the prospect of office was near. Place conceived it to be his duty to make them voluble again, and so he began once more his old task of organizing agitation. Letters were written here, there, and everywhere; deputations were arranged; public opinion was moulded through the press and from the platform; and at length backbone was put into ministers, who would much rather have been spineless. The Reform Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on March 1st, 1831. It was a better Bill than Place had expected. Its sponsors thought it was worse than he expected, and they were prepared for his rage; but while he proceeded to agitate for more, he was fairly content with what he had received. The Bill received a second reading on March 21st, by a majority of one, which meant that defeat in committee was certain. On April 19th and 21st the Government were defeated, and on April 22nd the King prorogued Parliament, which immediately dissolved. The new Parliament met on June 14th, having a majority of over a hundred in favor of the Bill, which was at once reintroduced. The Tories so successfully obstructed its passage through the Commons that it did not reach the Lords until September 21st. On October 8th the motion for the second reading in the Upper Chamber was rejected by a majority of forty-one. It was now that Place's fighting instinct was thoroughly aroused. On the day following the rejection of the Bill he organized a demonstration in its favor, which was held on October 13th, and was a great success. On Monday he attended four public meetings, and on Tuesday, hearing that the Whigs were likely to compromise over the Bill, he wrote a letter, which he hoped would be shown to the ministers, in which he hinted that a riot would probably take place. He addressed meetings, drew up a memorial to the ministers declaring that if the Bill were not passed in its original form "this country will inevitably be plunged into all the horrors of a violent revolution," and immediately took a deputation to see Lord Grey. The deputation was received by that lord at a quarter to eleven at night in a very hoity-toity manner. "Any disturbances would be put down by military force." Dissensions began to separate the reformers themselves. The middle class reformers were prepared to compromise on the

Bill, they to be included in it, the working classes to be excluded from it. The fury of Place on this occasion was remarkable. He wrote to Grote, the historian, "they [the working-class] proved that they were ready, at any risk, and at any sacrifice, to stand by us. And then what did we do? We abandoned them, deserted, betrayed them, and shall have betrayed them again before three days have passed over our heads. . . . We, the dastardly, talking, swaggering dogs, will sneak away with our tails between our legs."

The amount of work he did was almost as great as he did when he organized the campaign for the repeal of the Combination Laws; and it was as effective, for the Government introduced a new Reform Bill which was as good as, if not better than, the old one. The troubles of the reformers were not yet over, for the Bill had to be forced through the Lords. Before the Bill reached that House there was an outbreak of cholera in England, which made political agitation almost impossible. "The King, under the influence of his wife, his sisters, and his illegitimate children," writes Mr. Graham Wallas, "was now nervous about the Bill, and disinclined to secure ministers a majority by creating peers." The Whigs were ignorant of this, although the Tories were aware of it. On March 26th, 1832, the second Reform Bill was introduced into the House of Lords. Place had drawn up a petition to the peers in favor of the Bill, and this petition, "quietly offensive," was printed in many newspapers. Contrary to expectation, the Lords seemed willing to read the Bill a second time, and this fact caused suspicion to grow in the minds of the reformers that an intrigue to spoil the Bill was being carried on. Place discovered that the intrigue was to substitute a twenty pound franchise for the ten pound franchise in London. On April 17th the Bill was read a second time by a majority of nine, but was wrecked in committee, by a majority of thirty-five, on May 7th. The King declined to create the peers demanded by Lord Grey, who resigned, and the Duke of Wellington was called again to power. This in itself was sufficient to inflame the people. A bishop was mobbed in church and the King was hooted on Constitution Hill. Queen Adelaide was publicly execrated. People made preparations for the revolution which they felt to be at hand, and military men set about drilling the reformers for the fight.

"Go for Gold."

A far simpler means of breaking the opposition than that of bloodshed was found by Place. He caused a number of bills to be posted about the country which bore this legend: To stop the Duke go for gold. The people were advised to draw their balances from the Bank of England and to demand payment in gold. The depletion of the reserve was not a thing to be contemplated by the directors of the bank with equanimity. The King, a poor creature, gave way, Lord Grey obtained his guarantees, and the Bill was safe.

Its passage, however, made small difference to the working class, in whose minds the doctrines of Robert Owen and Thomas Hodgskin began to develop. A new word was added to the language—

Socialism—and in 1833 Owen, with others, endeavored to form a national federation of trade unions. The originators of the movement, which quickly attracted half a million members, proposed to begin their work by declaring a general strike for an eight hours day on March 1st, 1834. This strike, however, did not take place, the funds of the federation having been wasted on a number of sectional strikes, and the movement almost died. On March 17th, 1834, six agricultural laborers were sentenced to seven years transportation for "administering illegal oaths" while forming a branch of the Grand National Trades Union. The declining movement was restored to strength, and strong efforts were made to secure the remission of this brutal sentence, but without success. There followed to this a period of industrial unrest, and then gradually the Grand National Trades Union drooped and died. But if the thing itself was dead, the discontent which caused it to be was still potent.

The Passing of the Reform Bill.

The enactment of the Reform Bill, after a discussion spread over a period of nearly a century, only added half a million persons to the list of electors. Almost the whole of the laboring class was still unenfranchised. On August 14th, 1834, destitution legally became a crime. The new Poor Law, with its principle of deterrence, was the instrument to this end. The Poor Law Commissioners asserted that, in the interests of the independent poor (a phrase without meaning), the condition of the pauper should be less eligible than that of the worst situated independent laborers, on the ground that if this were not so, there would probably cease to be any independent laborers. Two things were then operating on the working class mind: one was the treachery of the middle class, which, with the aid of the working class, obtained enfranchisement for itself, and then refused to assist the working class to similar political freedom; the other was the poverty brought about by the failure of the harvests and the depression of trade in 1837. Dear food, low wages, and scarcity of work made the difficulty of devising a condition of life for paupers which would be less eligible than that of the worst situated free laborer one which the administrators of the Poor Law could not surmount. They did their best, however, and the result was an agitation against the Poor Law, a demand for factory legislation and for political reform. Out of this discontent came Chartism.

Chartism.

In 1838 Francis Place drew up the "People's Charter," in which were set forth the famous six points: Manhood Suffrage, Equal Electoral Districts, Vote by Ballot, Annual Parliaments, Abolition of Property Qualification for Members of the House of Commons, and Payment of Members of Parliament for their services. The Chartist movement in England resembled the Fenian movement in Ireland, in that a great deal of fuss was made about nothing. The proposals contained in the "People's Charter," seem to us to be mild enough, but to the oligarchy of that time they seemed to denote the

end of all things ; and men went into the streets and fought with the soldiers for the sake of the Charter. In 1839 ten men were killed and many were wounded in Newport, Monmouthshire. Three of the leaders were sentenced to death, their punishment being afterwards commuted to transportation. In 1842 there were riots in the northern and midland parts of England, and in 1848 the Chartists scared the wits out of England with a proposal to hold a demonstration at Kennington Common, which demonstration turned out to be as futile as the Fenian invasion of Canada.

Francis Place had little to do with the Chartists. His habit of mind was different from that of Lovett, Vincent, Cleave, and the other leaders of the movement. He was a Malthusian economist, they were Socialists and angry class warriors ; and so, although he respected them and maintained friendly relations with them, particularly with Lovett, his association with them was of small account. His chief work was to draft the Charter and to secure the commutation of the death sentences into sentences of transportation. They belonged to the order of pioneers ; he belonged to the order of men who come after pioneers. But though he could not work easily with pioneers, he was fully conscious of their utility. "Such men," he wrote, "are always, and necessarily, ignorant of the best means of progressing towards the accomplishment of their purpose at a distant time, and can seldom be persuaded that the time for their accomplishment is distant. Few, indeed, such men would interfere at all unless they imagined that the change they desired was at hand. They may be considered as pioneers who, by their labors and their sacrifices, smooth the way for those who are to follow them. Never without such persons to move forward, and never but through their errors and misfortunes, would mankind have emerged from barbarism and gone on as they have done, slow and painful as their progress has been."

Old Age and Death.

Place was now an old man. Misfortune closed in on him towards the end of his life. He had married a second time and the marriage was unhappy. He separated from his wife. He lost some of his money ; and then, last scene of all, paralysis fell upon him and his brain became affected. Death came to him quietly in the night, when no one was by. He passed out, almost forgotten. "Can death," wrote Marcus Aurelius, "be terrible to him to whom that only seems good which in the ordinary course of nature is seasonable ; to him to whom, whether his actions be many or few, so they be all good, is all one ; and who, whether he beholds the things of the world, being always the same, either for many years or for few years only, is altogether indifferent ?"

Francis Place was not of that order of democrats who believe that the common man knows more than the rare man. He had not the Chestertonian trust in instinct ; he was an early Victorian Fabian. "We want in public men," he wrote, "dogged thinking, clear ideas, comprehensive views, and pertinacity, i.e., a good share

of obstinacy or hardheadedness." Kind hearts might be more than coronets, but good brains were better than either. On the other hand, he knew enough of rare men to know that they were fallible. Politicians with careers to fashion and reformers who have gone mad on their theories, these were creatures against whom the common man must always be on his guard. He could not suffer fools gladly, but he was not that worst of fools, the fool who will not learn from fools. Spence and Owen were fools in his eyes because they allowed themselves to become obsessed with one idea, but he was not oblivious of the fact that that idea was of value. It was his fortune not to possess a sense of humor; he could not joke. No man who can see the ridiculous can possibly be a leader; no man with a sense of humor can ever head a revolution, for the absurdities of enthusiasm will stand up before him so prominently that he will not be able to see the goal towards which the enthusiasts are marching. Keir Hardie leads men; Bernard Shaw laughs at them. Although Place had spent so many years of his life in pulling strings and had frequently seen men's motives laid bare before him, he did not become cynical. "I take the past," he wrote to Lovett, "and comparing it with the present, see an immense change for the better." In the same letter he wrote: "I saw that to better the condition of others to any considerable extent was a long uphill piece of work; that my best efforts would produce very little effect. But I saw very distinctly that I could do nothing better, nothing indeed half so good." He was full of rare courage and rare faith. I have called him a Neo-Malthusian, although that term did not come into use until the time of Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, because his views were identical with those who were so named. He propagated his Neo-Malthusianism to his own detriment and loss. It was sufficient for him to believe in a thing to nerve himself to bring it to be; but he had to be convinced that the thing was worth while. He saw men as brains wasted. Great masses of people were born, passed through the world, and died without conferring any advantage on their fellows; not because they were indolent or indifferent, but solely because use was not made of them. It was his desire so to order the world that every man and woman in it could move easily to his or her place. That man is a democrat who believes in a world where the wise man may be wise and the fool may be foolish, and no one will call him out of his name or demand more from him than he can give; who believes in diversity rather than uniformity, knowing that it is the variations from type which make type tolerable. Fools and wise men have their place in the world; the one may be the inspiration of the other. Plato and Aristotle were the fulfilment of each other. Owen and Place made it possible for democracy to be in England.

Bring me my bow of burning gold !
 Bring me my arrows of desire !
 Bring me my spear : O clouds unfold !
 Bring me my chariot of fire !

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

So wrote William Blake. If Owen wielded the sword and stretched the bow of burning gold, Place forged the one and made the other. It was that men might know that Place worked without ceasing ; he made mistakes, but he had the right vision, and in good time men came to know more than possibly he had expected. It is our vision that matters, not the mistakes we make. We may go forth like Columbus, to discover a new way to the Indies, and fail in our endeavor. But what matter ? We may discover the Americas.

The only book on the subject is : "The Life of Francis Place, 1771-1854," by GRAHAM WALLAS, M.A. Longmans, Green & Co. ; 1898. Published at 12s. and subsequently reprinted at 2s. 6d. Both editions are out of print, and another cheap reprint is under consideration.

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